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Engaging a Family's Support Network in Non-violent Resistance: The Experiences of Supporters.

Abstract

Non-violent resistance (NVR) is a systemic approach which aims to build parent agency and a positive support network around children who display destructive behaviour. Supporters play a key role in NVR, however there is limited research on how to engage them in NVR.

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the members of a family's support network on the implementation of NVR. These experiences were then interpreted in line with theories of motivation and change in order to understand how the NVR practitioner and parents can best engage with supporters in future. Eight supporters were interviewed and themes developed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The study analysis found five themes: contemplation, committing to action, looking for change, needing to cope and working within a social context. These are interpreted in line with theories of change and motivation. Clinical recommendations and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Practitioner Points

- Practitioners need to consider that taking part in NVR can be experienced by supporters in both positive and negative ways.
- Practitioners may be able to improve supporters' levels of engagement and motivation in the NVR process by considering areas such as understanding of NVR, positive communication and the impact on relationships.

Introduction

Non-violent resistance (NVR) is a systemic approach which aims to build parent agency and develop a positive support network around children who display violent and destructive behaviour (Weinblatt & Omer, 2008). Child violence has been described as a growing social problem with parents experiencing embarrassment, helplessness, shame and fear around their child's behaviour both at home and in the community (Coogan, 2014). Based on coercion theory, NVR helps parents overcome helplessness and develop constructive responses to their child's behaviour whilst developing a supportive network around the family (Jakob, 2018; Patterson, 2016; Weinblatt & Omer, 2008).

NVR has developed from the use of non-violent and non-escalatory interventions in the socio-political field and is concerned with addressing violent behaviour of children towards their parents. The main principles of NVR are described as 'refraining from violence, reducing escalation, utilizing outside support, and maintaining respect for the other' (p.688 Omer & Lebowitz, 2016). NVR acknowledges the societal aspect to violence and so interventions require consistent positive action to be used by the whole personal and professional network around the child through the 'systematic mobilisation of support' (Weinblatt & Omer, 2008).

The evidence base for NVR is growing, with research being conducted across a widening range of populations and settings such as: youth with externalizing problems, schools, inpatient units and foster parents (Attwood, Butler, & Rogers, in press; Golan, Shilo, & Omer, 2016; Jakob, 2018; Van Holen, Vanderfaeillie, & Omer, 2016).

Systems theory views individuals not as independent of one another but as existing within a relational system (Bateson, 1972). Therefore, by effectively making changes within a family's wider support network through NVR, positive changes can be made for the parents and child (Jakob, 2018). Walsh's (2003) Family Resilience Model supports this, describing the importance of 'mobilising kin, social and community networks' (p7) in order to maximise positive change in a family system.

Interpersonal support has been labelled as a predictor of therapeutic success in NVR, with parents valuing the involvement of supporters to help them implement positive action (Attwood et al., in press; Jakob, 2018). In NVR the purpose of the support network is: to provide practical support to the parents, ensure that members of network do not feel alone in managing the child's behaviour, and to make the child's behaviour and the parent's responses transparent within the network. The support network helps develop the systemic presence of the parents, showing the child that their parents do not keep violence secret, but connect and seek support from others (Partnership Projects, 2018). Effective support has been described by parents as a way of 'breaking the silence' and building 'strength to gradually resist behaviour' (p10, Shapiro, 2014).

Based on the above, it could be suggested that effective support is a key factor in the NVR process, building systemic presence and giving parents the strength to make changes. It is therefore important to understand how to engage and motivate supporters who are invited to be part of NVR.

There is limited research on how the practitioner and parents can most effectively involve and motivate all the relations, friends, carers, teachers and

professionals the family has contact with; however, a study on staff experiences of NVR in a residential unit has suggested that training and individual's intentions to use NVR may not be enough to ensure that positive action is taken (Van Gink et al., 2017).

This could be understood in the context of the transtheoretical stages of change model (Norcross, Krebs, & Prochaska, 2011; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). Prochaska & DiClemente (1983) and Norcross et al. (2011) argue that change does not occur immediately but through a progression of pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance. Supporters' experiences may be interpreted as moving gradually through these stages, however there is no research exploring how supporters in NVR might be encouraged to move towards the stage of action and/or maintain that action.

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) suggests that the social contexts in which people operate can affect their motivation to action through the development of competence, autonomy and relatedness to others. There may be ways in which families and/or NVR practitioners can make positive changes to this social context to increase the motivation of supporters. To the awareness of the authors there is no research exploring this, however considering the experiences of supporters may shed light on barriers and motivators for a support network. This study aims to explore these experiences and interpret them in line with theories of motivation and change in order to understand how best to engage a family's support network in NVR interventions delivered in future.

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of the members of a family's support network on the implementation of NVR. These experiences will then be interpreted in line with theories of motivation and change in order to understand how the NVR practitioner and parents can best engage with supporters in future.

The research questions for this study are:

1. How do members of a support network experience being involved in NVR?
2. How can members of a support network be most effectively engaged in implementing NVR positive action?

Method

This study was approached with the phenomenological and hermeneutical emphasis of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The study is concerned with the lived experience of the participants but acknowledges that doing so requires some level of interpretation by the researcher. This approach was chosen as it focuses on the depth rather than breadth of individual's experiences and is in line with the hermeneutical stance of the researcher.

Service Context

This study was developed in association with a UK based agency specialising in the delivery of NVR interventions to families through trained practitioners. The service was interested in exploring whether there are ways in which supporters could be engaged more effectively in NVR interventions delivered in future.

Participants

Participants were individuals from the support network of four families who had experience of taking part in an NVR intervention delivered by the agency. Two participants were interviewed from each family's support network (total participants $n = 8$). The age range of supporters was 44 – 59 years; three participants were male, five were female. The contact supporters had with the child ranged from weekly to a couple of times each year. All the supporters interviewed were either friends ($n = 3$), neighbours ($n = 2$), or extended family members ($n = 5$).

Participants were recruited through the agency. Families who practitioners felt had support networks who engaged well with the intervention were approached to take part. As the aim of this study was to explore how a support network can most effectively be engaged, it was expected that supporters who had engaged well would yield more useful data in this respect.

In line with the phenomenology of IPA it is acknowledged that this research will be looking at the individual experiences of the participants and therefore purposive sampling was used rather than obtaining a random or representative sample.

Data Collection

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The questions were developed with the aim of eliciting data related to the two research questions whilst remaining as open as possible to allow participants to freely discuss their experiences. The questions were developed with the transtheoretical stages of change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) in mind, targeting the factors which may have influenced

the supporters in moving into the stage of action and exploring what others might do differently to them.

Prior to data collection the semi-structured interview questions were developed and piloted with family members currently involved in NVR interventions with the agency. The following questions were chosen:

1. What is your understanding of Non-Violent Resistance?
2. Tell me about your experience of being part of an NVR intervention.
3. What inspired you to implement planned NVR positive action?
4. Tell me about any barriers to implementing NVR positive action.
5. What was motivating and de-motivating in the process of persevering with NVR positive action?
6. Do you feel anything could be done differently to engage supporters in NVR?
7. Any other comments?

Semi-structured interviews were completed with all supporters by the first author. The interviews took place either by Skype, on the phone or in person. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed prior to analysis using IPA.

Data Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 1996) was used to interpret the data using the description given in Osborn and Smith's (1998) paper on personal experiences of back pain.

The first interview transcript was read with free comments noted on the left hand margin, then re-read with emerging themes noted in the right hand margin. These emerging themes were then grouped into superordinate themes

for that participant. This process was then repeated for each interview, with the aim of looking at each person's experience separately from the experience of others. On completion of this process the themes from each participant were interpreted with relevant theories in mind (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 2012; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) to draw out more general superordinate and subordinate themes from the group of participants as a whole.

Ethical Considerations

The study was developed in line with the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014). Ethical approval was given by the University of Bath Psychology Ethics Committee (reference number 18-064) and by the agency's Ethics Committee.

Findings

The five superordinate themes that emerged from the overall analysis were contemplation, committing to action, looking for change, needing to cope and working within a social context (see Table 1).

Table 1

Superordinate and subordinate themes which emerged from the analysis.

<insert Table 1 here>

These themes are described in more detail below with their respective subordinate themes. Quotes are given with participant codes and line numbers in brackets.

Contemplation

Participants described a period of contemplation after being asked to support a family through NVR. They discussed trying to develop an understanding of the approach whilst wanting to help the family as best they could. During this time participants found themselves making comparisons of behaviour and/or parenting and feeling uncertain about aspects of being a supporter.

Developing an understanding. Participants were asked to describe their understanding of NVR. They discussed their understanding changing over time. Moving from knowing 'nothing about it when it started' (F2S2, 112-113), then to a theoretical understanding (e.g. relating NVR to it's socio-political background), followed by a 'more practical understanding now of how that works' (F2S2, 12).

Several participants talked about how NVR 'resonated' (e.g. F1S1, 12) with them and described how they wanted to understand more about it as it fitted with their view of the world. Others used metaphor to describe their understanding. 'It's a bit like a ship with a rudder really, just trying to keep it on the straight and narrow' (F4S1, 10-11).

Wanting to help. All participants discussed a desire to help the family who had requested support. For some this was a 'general willingness' (F2S1, 62) as a result of the request, and for others this was a specific desire to help either the child or the parents individually: 'He's a young vulnerable boy that needed some guidance' (F3S1, 37-38); 'I was there supporting (father)' (F4S2, 38). One participant commented that it was 'glorious to be able to help them' (F4S1, 70).

Making comparisons. Many participants compared their own experiences to that of the family they were supporting. This was particularly in relation to parenting style and/or supporters' relationship with their own children. For some this involved reflecting on parenting they had done in the past, whereas for others it was more of an active comparison with their current personal approach. 'I think that at some level my sister is a much more hands on and engaged parent than perhaps I was' (F2S1, 102-104); 'I'm being asked to intervene with (child) and (child) about something that I would have possibly let slip with mine' (F1S1, 66-67).

Other supporters described hearing about the details of the child's violence as humbling, making them aware that they were in a less difficult situation to the family they were supporting. 'I think the experience as I say has made me very grateful for my own situation' (F4S2, 120-121).

Uncertainty. The interviews gave a sense of supporters going into the unknown in terms of using NVR. Several participants talked about being guided by the family as they did not feel that they had fully grasped what being a supporter might involve. 'We didn't really know about the programme. I was really led by (father) and what he wanted' (F4S2, 90-91).

This uncertainty resulted in anxiety from many of the participants as they were unsure what to expect and did not want to over-commit themselves both practically and emotionally. 'Before I started I was a bit anxious about saying yes as I thought help, this could be quite full on and more than I can cope with' (F2S1, 144-146).

Committing to Action

Participants talked about NVR being a commitment and described the actions they took as a supporter. All participants described taking on a role and feeling like NVR was a process which they were led through. Many of the participants talked with a sense of hope about the intervention and sensing the importance of being there for the family.

Taking on a role. Participants described a range of different supporter roles, for example 'my role has been a letter or an email to them' (F1S1, 21-22) and 'the supporter role is a genuine friendship of an older person with a younger person – warts and all' (F1S2, 245-247). Most supporters felt that there were a range of roles available to them (e.g. phoning the child regularly, doing sit-ins, meeting with the parents for support), but that they chose to be involved in a specific way and then stuck to this over time.

Being led through a process. The experiences shared were not ones of autonomy, but being led by parents through a specific process: 'I think I tended, if she said to write a message, to write a message' (F2S1, 57-58); 'we respond in a set way' (F2S2, 19). In general the participants viewed the parents as the experts in NVR, however several commented on helpful conversations from NVR practitioners. Participants seemed to enjoy the clarity of being instructed through the process, particularly at times when it felt 'a bit counter-intuitive' (F2S2, 114) as it gave them confidence that what they were doing was the correct way to support the family through NVR.

Holding hope. There was a theme of hope amongst the supporters as they described taking action in line with NVR. Participants talked about how 'there is hope' (F1S2, 296) in terms of seeing changes in the child or family and potentially making further changes as NVR continued. Some supporters

described needing an initial element of hopefulness in order to take on the supporter role as they had no experience of NVR in the past. 'I [didn't] know whether NVR was going to achieve that behaviour change but I was very willing to give it a go' (F2S1, 64- 66).

Being there. Despite taking on specific actions, participants also shared experiences of simply being there for the family, for example 'I was there as a friend for her really' (F3S2, 56-57) and 'I was amazed at how supportive saying nothing was' (F4S1, 40-41). Supporters talked about times when they felt that the most valuable part of their role was not in taking positive action, but in the parents or child knowing they were there to listen to them and be with them when they needed it most. There was a sense that the participants felt they were confirming their commitment to existing relationship with the parents or child by taking on the supporter role.

Looking for Change

All participants described seeking out evidence of change in the child or family they were supporting. Change was the main motivator for the supporters, even when it was inconsistent, and most supporters described a sense of wanting more.

Communicating change. The supporters talked about communication with the family in the sense that they were wanting to hear about change. Some supporters had the experience of not hearing enough about change and doubting whether NVR was working. It was noted how the nature of the supporter role involves hearing a lot about violence in the family and therefore a large amount of positive feedback is required in order to keep supporters feeling motivated. Supporters also described how it was difficult to reflect on

whether things were improving or not as they struggled to remember what things used to be like in the family. 'I've spoken to (child's father) and (child's mother) to say how are things going or whatever, and there's a good phase and a bad phase. But thinking about when you started...is it as bad as that or are they improving?' (F1S1, 158-163).

Change as motivating. 'Things changing or improving was highly motivating' (F2S1, 131-133) for all of the participants. They talked about it being 'very encouraging' (F4S1, 44) and being motivated by 'small steps' (F4S1, 122). Supporters referred to this in terms of changes in the child, changes in the parents and changes in the family as a whole. Supporters found themselves able to recognise very slight differences that, in context, were hugely positive steps for the family.

Change as inconsistent. Most of the participants experienced change as inconsistent. They talked about 'ebbs and flows' (F1S2, 42) and feeling as though they were taking 'two steps forward, one step back' (F4S2, 82). It appeared to be multiple smaller events which represented positive change for supporters, versus single larger events which then represented a backwards step for the child. Supporters described this as a context in which it was sometimes difficult to stay motivated as a supporter, however most commented on how overall the change moved slowly and steadily in a positive direction.

Wanting more. One participant in particular experienced a strong sense of wanting more of NVR. It seemed that once supporters had seen positive change in the child they felt a sense of value in NVR as an approach and were keen to continue this with the family, but unsure whether this would or should be the case. The supporter talked about how 'it seemed to peter out at the end'

(F4S1, 145) and uncertainty around 'whether the process should have gone on for another 6 months or another year, or whether it should have just gone on regardless as a way of life' (F4S1, 170-172).

Needing to Cope

There was a strong narrative within the interviews about needing to cope with challenges throughout the NVR process. The supporters discussed trying to manage difficult emotions, balance priorities, wanting to protect others and then looking for support with these challenges.

Managing difficult emotions. A range of difficult emotions were described by the participants including feeling 'very awkward to begin with' (F4S2, 22), finding the process 'extremely frustrating' (F3S2, 155) and feeling 'very sad' (F3S1, 22). The supporters discussed in depth how they were not prepared for the emotional strain of being a supporter, for example dealing with the impact that violence **had** on them as part of the family's wider social context. There was a sense of supporters feeling like they were at their limit in terms of coping emotionally with the role, but still wanting to support the family. They described: 'it's difficult because sometimes you feel like you want to do more, but emotionally I'm not sure how much more I could have done, or you can do' (F1S1, 151-153); 'you can write down what a sit-in is, but the emotion of going through a sit-in is a lot tougher than you think' (F4S1, 199-200); 'I think the commitment to seeing a nice, a good human being being violent...does have an impact' (F4S1, 197-199).

Balancing priorities. Several participants talked about having to cope with balancing their home lives with their commitment to being a supporter. This commitment was described in both a practical and emotional sense. The

supporters seemed to be managing a dilemma of wanting to provide as much help as possible through NVR, but at times feeling like this came at a price of neglecting their own family's needs. 'Sometimes it's been tricky as sometimes things maybe haven't been easy at home when they've been asking me to get involved with (child) and (child)' (F1S1, 34-37).

Protecting others. Some participants felt that they wanted to protect their own children from the NVR process and/or the child they were supporting. Supporters were wary of their own children developing similar behaviours to the child they were working with through NVR. Equally supporters seemed aware that knowledge about the violence might taint their own child's view of the family they were supporting. There was a sense of the supporters wanting to protect the privacy of the family by not sharing the details of their involvement in NVR. 'I mean I've got a 12 and a 13 year old so I didn't want them put in a situation with (child) if he came with us anywhere' (F3S2, 102-103). 'It's not something I want to share with them because it's very much a thing between me and (child's father) or me and (child) or whatever' (F1S1, 122-124).

Looking for support. Whilst coping with the issues described above, several supporters would have appreciated more support to cope: 'because (mother) and (father) are supporting (child) they haven't really got the headspace so much to support the supporters. So I wonder whether the supporters could support each other in a different way' (F1S2, 100-101). Supporters felt that they could not look to the family for support as they were dealing with issues around their child. For some supporters, this family may have been a strong source of support for them prior to starting NVR and

therefore they **felt** the need to find other ways to cope. Supporters talked about feedback being valuable and wanting to receive more of this throughout the intervention to keep them confident in their own actions. 'I just think a little bit more hand holding through the process – are we on track, are we doing the right things – for me, would have helped' (F4S1, 227-229).

Working Within a Social Context

Supporters felt they were working within a wider social context - within the family, their existing relationships and the expectations of wider society – which affected their experience of putting NVR into practice.

Working within the family. The participants described feeling like they were joining the system of the family they were supporting, becoming aware that they were not just supporting the child but supporting the family as a whole. One participant described how 'I really felt that this was about (mother) and (father) as much as me seeing (child)' (F1S2, 27-28). Others felt that in general they were having to 'work with the family and the dynamics and the relationships' (F2S2, 94-95). Supporters discussed feeling like they were now part of the family dynamics in a way that they had not felt previously.

Working within existing relationships. Several participants felt that wanting to preserve their existing relationships with the family members were a barrier to being an effective supporter, for example wanting to remain as a friend rather than helper: 'it's a sort of barrier in the way the relationships are set up' (F2S1, 122-123). Supporters commented on how their involvement in the NVR process had changed their relationship with the family, feeling that they had lost aspects of their previous relationship which they valued. 'I've

become an NVR person and there's a fair bit for normal friendship stuff that isn't nurtured so much.' (F1S2, 55-57).

Working within society's expectations. Finally, participants discussed in different ways how working within society's expectations was difficult to manage, feeling like 'you're blamed if you do and you're blamed if you don't' (F1S1, 200). Participants described sharing the pressure of living up to being the stereotypical perfect parent, and a sense of NVR being seen as a way to achieve that. The supporters discussed how learning more about NVR made them feel like their own parenting wasn't good enough, whilst at the same time understanding that society places unrealistic standards on parents. They also described empathising with the family around the difficulties of managing their child's violence, with the expectation that society would view the parents as a failure for not being able to control their child.

Discussion & Implications

The aim of this study was to use a phenomenological approach to understand individual experiences of supporters taking part in NVR. As there is limited research in this area, it is hoped that this study may be able to shed light on how best to involve and motivate support networks in NVR delivered in future.

The analysis of individual experiences in this study would support Van Gink et al.'s (2017) research suggesting that training and individual intentions may not be enough to ensure that NVR positive action is used. A range of potential barriers emerged from the analysis which may impact on people's ability to support a family. These included both internal factors (e.g. managing

difficult emotions) and external factors (e.g. working within society's expectations) which are likely to affect the supporters' motivation for action.

These factors will now be discussed in relation to the two research questions which this study has aimed to address.

How do members of a support network experience being involved in NVR?

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) could be used to interpret the analysis of supporters' experiences. Self-determination theory suggests that the social context can affect individuals' needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness to others. Deci & Ryan (2012) suggest that if these needs are satisfied then it will increase individuals' autonomous motivation.

Supporters described wanting to see change in the child and family, which may reflect their need for competence, giving them a sense of achievement and mastery. Participants also described change and ruptures in relationships as a difficulty in being an NVR supporter (e.g. 'working within relationships'). This may reflect the need for relatedness not being met. Participants also described difficulty in NVR impacting on their own lives (e.g. 'balancing priorities') which could be seen as negatively affecting their sense of autonomy over their own lives.

Based on the themes arising from the analysis, there may be ways in which families and/or NVR practitioners may increase a sense of competence, relatedness and autonomy in supporters. To increase a sense of competence, communication between the family, NVR practitioner and supporter could be improved. Supporters stated that they felt motivated by hearing about change, and positive feedback from the family and/or NVR practitioner on their supportive actions may add to a sense of competence. Relatedness is likely to be

increased by ensuring any change or ruptures in relationships are dealt with constructively, and by nurturing the existing relationship that the supporter has with the family and the child. Deci & Ryan (2012) would suggest that the supporter needs to feel connected to and cared for by others. Finally, autonomy could be affected by feeling entirely led by parents and/or constantly 'on call' for NVR support. It may not be possible to change these aspects of NVR, however if the supporter is able to independently access peer supervision from others with similar experiences this may help diminish the impact of reduced autonomy in the supporter role.

How can members of a support network be most effectively engaged in implementing NVR positive action?

Individual experiences could also be understood within the framework of the transtheoretical stages of change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) as the themes of 'contemplation' and 'taking action' suggest progression through these stages of change. The themes of 'looking for change', 'needing to cope' and 'working within relationships' illustrate what may affect maintenance of that action over time. Although a sense of pre-contemplation or preparation did not emerge from the analysis, many supporters commented on not having heard of NVR prior to discussing it with the family and also talked about considering their commitment to NVR and then being led by the parents through a specific process.

Several factors could be drawn out from the analysis which may encourage supporters to move from contemplation to action. Firstly, participants could be supported in developing their understanding of NVR further as most supporters found themselves uncertain about aspects of the

approach prior to taking action. It may be that an improved understanding of NVR may help supporters to feel that they are 'leading into action' rather than 'being led'. Secondly, supporters may be motivated by more clarity on the type of commitment required from them. The theme of 'uncertainty' reflected supporters feeling that they lacked confidence in whether they would be able to commit to the role.

From the analysis it would appear that individuals experienced most difficulty at the point of maintenance, in relation to 'looking for change', 'needing to cope' and 'working within a social context'. It appeared that main motivational factor to continue NVR was seeing and hearing about change. It may be that if parents are able to communicate change regularly and effectively to their supporters then they are more likely to feel motivated to maintain that helping role. In relation to 'needing to cope' and 'working within relationships', assistance may be beneficial in helping supporters understand the emotional and relational commitment of the role, prepare ahead of time how they may cope with difficulties such as 'balancing priorities' and 'protecting others' and possibly link up with other supporters to validate any difficult experiences.

Summary of Suggestions

Table 2 provides a summary of suggestions which could be used with the aim of improving the engagement and motivation of supporters in NVR.

Table 2

Summary of suggestions for improvement.

<insert Table 2 here>

Reflections

It was acknowledged that the researcher's own reality will have impacted on the understanding and interpretation of the participants experiences in line with a phenomenological approach (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Reflective supervision was used to enhance awareness of this, with discussion points such as:

- The researcher is a White, British, Female, Clinical Psychology Trainee who has no experience in either NVR or adoptive families prior to conducting this study. This may have given her the benefit of a being a 'blank canvas' in conducting the interviews and the ability to strongly hold a 'not knowing' position.
- A combined personal and professional interest in adoption may have had a conflicting impact on hearing the supporters' stories. On one hand the researcher is familiar in her professional life with discussions about the difficult and distressing aspects of people's lives; however, having a personal interest in adoption may have created a conflicting desire to avoid distressing stories and hold up a 'rosy' image of adopting a child in future.
- It was felt that more positive themes may have been missed due to this research being conducted as a service improvement project. Looking for ways that a service can improve may have moved the focus away from the positives and successes discussed by supporters.

Limitations

This study is limited in a small sample size which consisted of only supporters who were friends, neighbours or extended family of the child. The

findings would therefore not be expected to reflect the experiences of professionals or other members of the community who may be taking on the NVR supporter role.

The use of purposive sampling may also have impacted on the results, as staff at the agency were encouraged to recruit through families who they felt had engaged well with the NVR process. It is possible that involving participants who had not engaged so well in the process would have yielded very different data.

It is acknowledged that individualist theories have been used to interpret the findings in this case and therefore consideration of wider structural and contextual influences may have been missed. These theories were chosen as the research questions and design were focused on the individual experiences and motivations of each supporter; however, the authors emphasise that this is only one possible way of interpreting the data given.

Recommendations for Further Research

It would be interesting to explore other aspects of the supporter experience in more depth, for example the impact on their relationship with the family and child. Equally it may be useful to conduct change process research exploring what it is about the supporters role that results in helpful changes for a family. It may also be useful for research to be done around the implementation of the recommendations made in this paper.

Conclusion

This study has explored the experiences of supporters on the implementation of NVR. These experiences have been analysed using a phenomenological approach and interpreted in line with theories of change and

motivation. Suggestions for improvement have been given based on the analysis of these experiences to help families and NVR practitioners understand how to best engage with supporters in future.

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